

PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION MINUTES

TUESDAY, APRIL 4, 2000

Chair Parsons called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. at Twin Pines Senior and Community Center.

PRESENT, COMMISSIONERS: Peirona, Phillips, Mathewson, Purcell, Parsons

ABSENT, COMMISSIONER: Wiecha (arrived at 7:09 p.m.)

PRESENT, STAFF: Principal Planner de Melo, Fire Chief Jewell, City Attorney Savaree, Recording Secretary Wong

OATH OF OFFICE

City Clerk Kern administered the oath of office to new Commissioner Madeline Petersen.

AGENDA STUDY SESSION

Commissioner Parsons asked that the record show that there were seven commissioners at the meeting tonight.

Responding to Chair Parsons' request for a report on the Davey Glen presentation to the City Council, Principal Planner de Melo said that the Council stated that it was finally something that the City could live with in terms of the number of units, in terms of the preservation of open space, and the relocation of the historic house. Commissioner Purcell asked if the natural spring area containing the pampus cattails was part of the commercial portion of the property. Principal Planner de Melo responded that it was and that the site consisted of three parcels: one for the 32 homes, another for the historic home, and one for open space. Commissioner Purcell said that she was interested in cleaning the pampus grass out of the area and seeing more native vegetation.

AGENDA AMENDMENTS: None.

COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments): None.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Action Minutes of March 8, 2000

MOTION: By Commissioner Mathewson, seconded by Commissioner Phillips to approve the minutes. The motion passed with Commissioners Wiecha, Petersen, and Purcell abstaining.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Continued Public Hearing - 2594, 2596, and 2598 Coronet Blvd.; To consider a setback variance for three (3) single-family homes to allow setbacks of 14' where a 45' setback is required from the middle of a

private easement (Appl. No. 99-1087); APN: 044-260-170, -210, -220; Zoned: R-1B; CEQA Status: Exempt; Fred Voskoboynikov (Applicant/Owner)

Principal Planner de Melo presented the staff report recommending approval with conditions.

Commissioner Wiecha noted that some of the redwood trees on the landscape plan were depicted as 10-12' apart and asked if some of the trees would be eliminated or shifted to provide more appropriate spacing. Principal Planner de Melo responded that the goals were to provide enough site screening of the homes from traffic on Ralston Avenue and to encourage proper spacing so that each tree could grow without any hindrance from other trees. Commissioner Wiecha was concerned with ending up with fewer trees than depicted on the plan. Chair Parsons said he would like to see more trees, if possible.

Chair Parsons was concerned: 1) that some of the plants were not identified on the landscape plan, 2) where the stairs came down in the landscape plan, and 3) that the three houses should be built at the same time and not incrementally. Principal Planner de Melo stated that staff was open to any modifications to the landscape plan and that if it was the Commission's desire to approve the variance and a more detailed landscape plan could be submitted as a separate item prior to building permit application or approval. Chair Parsons felt that would be a good procedure.

In response to Commissioner Wiecha, Principal Planner de Melo replied that the goal was to integrate the retaining wall and fence to assure a cohesive look that would flow together. To further clarify the proposal, Principal Planner de Melo noted that it was obvious that portions of the existing fence of the two adjacent neighbors would have to be removed. Principal Planner de Melo discussed the modifications to the roadway. He said that the bulk of the landscaping that was proposed along the private roadway would actually be within the two adjacent property owners' backyards.

Chair Parsons felt that the cross section was confusing and suggested that the fencing be shown on the revised landscape plan as to how it would relate to the retaining wall and landscaping. He also expressed concerns about drainage provisions for the backyard of 2590 Coronet Boulevard and asked for clarification. Principal Planner de Melo replied that there was a drainage inlet at the very top of the roadway and believed that there was a catch basin adjacent to the rear portion of 2600 Coronet Boulevard along the private roadway. Chair Parsons stated that his concern was that the existing drainage pattern at 2600 Coronet drained the water from the front of the house to either side of the house and the proposed retaining wall supporting the driveway would block the drainage at the corner.

Commissioner Wiecha asked if fire suppression issues had been addressed. Principal Planner de Melo said that Fire Chief Jewell was present to answer questions about the proposed modifications and the conditions of approval. Chief Jewell explained the background and requirements of the fire department, concluding that there would be two hydrants added, one serving the three houses and one at the intersection.

In response to Commissioner Purcell, Chief Jewell replied that incidents would be attacked from the street address side. The whole roadway would be declared a fire lane with no parking since it was less than 20'. He added that it would not be much different than a number of existing nonconforming streets in Belmont and San Carlos, as well as the Harbor Industrial area. The fire vehicles would go down the 18' access road and would have to back out rather than turn around. He explained that the Fire Code

allowed substitutions or modifications to the access requirements such as additional fire protection enhancements to the structure and additional hydrants.

Chair Parsons asked if the applicant would like to speak.

Gene Yokopovich stated that he was the contractor for the subject project.

Chair Parsons asked the applicant how he planned to deal with drainage at the rear yard of 2590 Coronet Boulevard and Mr. Yokopovich replied that he had proposed eight 4" storm drainage catch basins and said that he could add a catch basin if there were any problems. Chair Parsons asked about drainage down the hill to 2600 Coronet and Mr. Yokopovich replied that the storm drain could be enlarged and another catch basin could be added in the area of concern. Principal Planner de Melo stated that staff would work closely with the applicant's engineer and with the Department of Public Works to avoid any adverse drainage situation for the adjacent property owners.

Commissioner Purcell stated her concerns about the safety and appearance of the proposed grade of the private roadway. Principal Planner de Melo explained the process leading to the current plan. Chair Parsons asked for a drawing that showed where the fence would be located. After discussion, the applicant stated that a fence would be placed adjacent to the raised road to the highest point of the grade. Commissioner Wiecha asked that the applicant detail how he planned to transition the top of the fence to match the roadway if it was on top of the retaining wall. Principal Planner de Melo said that staff could work with the applicant to create a 3-D or visual perspective of the fence at key locations throughout the roadway.

In response to Commissioner Wiecha, Principal Planner de Melo replied that a total of 1,470 cubic yards of soil would be imported, 355 for the roadway and the balance for the three lots. He added that staff could also bring a revised grading plan to the Commission for review at a subsequent meeting.

Chair Parsons opened the public hearing. No one came forward to speak.

MOTION: By Commissioner Peirona, seconded by Commissioner Purcell to close the public hearing. The motion passed.

The Commission and staff discussed the turf block issue. Commissioner Wiecha felt that turf block should not be made a requirement.

MOTION: By Commissioner Parsons to approve the variance, remove the turf block from the driveway, staff work with the applicant and the neighbors to come back with a more detailed landscape plan, a drainage plan that took into account the neighbor's drainage onto the neighbor's property, and a fencing diagram that would show how the fence would look.

Commissioner Wiecha felt that the amount of fill required should be looked at closely. Chair Parsons asked the applicant to provide another grading plan.

Commissioner Peirona stated that he would have a difficult time voting on the variance without knowing how it would be graded, the access into the project, and the location of the fence line.

Chair Parsons stated that there was a site plan before the Commission. The grading line was set for the driveway. He was proposing that this was a basic way to get into the property and would allow the

houses to be set in the approximate location by approving a variance and then ask the applicant to bring the requested items back for review.

The motion died for a lack of a second.

MOTION: By Commissioner Peirona to reopen and continue the public hearing.

Commissioner Peirona commented that these three homes would be visible from Ralston Avenue.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Phillips.

Commissioner Wiecha added that she felt okay with the road itself but that they would be conditioning the approval of the road on so many other issues that she did not feel that the applicant could proceed until they came back with the additional information requested.

The motion passed.

Commissioner Peirona liked the project and thought it would work. He wanted to be clear regarding the ingress and egress and what the hillside would look like.

Commissioner Phillips wanted to feel comfortable that the Commission was approving a project that those who were already living there would be comfortable with as well.

Continued Public Hearing - 2594 Coronet Blvd.; To consider design review for a new 3,000 sq. ft. home (Appl. No. 99-1088); APN: 044-260-170; Zoned: R-1B; CEQA Status: Exempt; Fred Voskoboynikov (Applicant/Owner)

Continued Public Hearing - 2596 Coronet Blvd.; To consider design review for a new 2,460 sq. ft. home (Appl. No. 99-1089); APN: 044-260-210; Zoned: R-1B; CEQA Status: Exempt; Fred Voskoboynikov (Applicant/Owner)

MOTION: By Commissioner Peirona, seconded by Commissioner Mathewson to continue the public hearings on the design reviews.

AYES: Phillips Mathewson, Petersen, Peirona, Parsons

NOES: Wiecha, Purcell

Design Review - 1000 block of El Camino Real and bordered by Ralston Av. and Emmett St; To consider an amendment to the sign height of the master sign program for the Village Center (Appl. No. 98-1109); APN: 045-182-250; Zoned: C-2; CEQA Status: Downtown Specific Plan EIR; Belmont Village Associates, LLC (Applicant/Owner)

Principal Planner de Melo presented the staff report recommending approval.

Chair Parsons asked if the applicant would like to speak to which Dave Irmer replied that he was very well represented.

Chair Parsons opened the public hearing.

Elaine Farmer, President, Central Neighborhood Assn., stated that Doris Barbegelata could not be present at the meeting and had given her a letter to read in reference to the Belmont Village Center

sign. Mrs. Farmer read the letter: "It is my understanding and the understanding of a group of other concerned Belmont residents that Julie Woepke, the Director of Economic Department has unilaterally made a decision to eliminate the sign identifying Belmont Village Center which was or is planned to be on the retaining wall on the corner of Belmont Village Center. If that information is correct this was done solely because of a complaint from a merchant in the Carlmont Village Shopping Center. It is our belief that the correct designation of the new complex on the southwest corner of El Camino and Ralston Avenue is in fact the Belmont Village Center. From the time of its conception through all of its construction stages and up to the present time it has been designated as Belmont Village Center without any objection to the designation. In fact the merchants involved there have relied on the designation and have already adopted and used the designation as their Belmont. It has been our understanding that many people have wished to create an atmosphere in Belmont that would give the feeling of a village. Many of us feel this is a good concept for all or at least a good part of our City. We do not think that anyone or any group of merchants has a vested right to use the word Village to the exclusion of other Belmont residents or merchants. Therefore, we are requesting that you consider this matter at this time when there can be some citizen input. With this request we are not critical of the Director of Economic Development because she may have good reason for her decision. If in fact she has made such a decision, we simply feel it important enough to have some citizen input and to be considered by you. Thank you."

Chair Parsons stated that the letter referenced an item that was not on the agenda tonight. Chair Parsons said this agenda item was an amendment to the sign height.

Ms. Farmer understood from Ms. Barbegelata that Commissioner Peirona had indicated that the issue would be put ahead of the agenda. Commissioner Peirona added that this item was not on the agenda and should have been brought up under Community Forum.

To set the record straight, Chair Parsons stated that the item was decided on, not by Julie Woepke but by the Planning Commission. The decision was that, because initially the retaining wall was going to be on the Village Center property and then it was decided to put it in the Caltrans right-of-way, it would not be owned by the property owner and, therefore, should not have any signs on it. There was much discussion in the Commission meetings on whether there should be a sign and what it should be. Mrs. Barbegelata was right that the Carlmont Village merchants objected to the signage at the time. Subsequently, the retaining wall was moved to be partially in public ownership and partially in private ownership and the decision was made by the Commission at public hearings that it would be best not to have any signage on the wall simply because the ownership could change. The sign could change, and if signage was allowed on that wall, then the wall on the other intersection could say "Blockbuster." The record showed that the Commission decided there would be no signage on the wall. The Commission was also concerned about vandalism of any signage on the wall.

Commissioner Peirona stated that he did not believe there was any discussion from ownership that they really wanted the sign at that time; he may have considered it a different way if the ownership had said that they really wanted the sign and it was important to them.

Chair Parsons stated that it was a matter that came before the Planning Commission, was a properly noticed public hearing, was discussed and voted on, and was not appealed within the ten day period. He said that he would call Mrs. Barbegelata to explain the circumstances.

MOTION: By Commissioner Wiecha, seconded by Commissioner Phillips to close the public hearing. The motion passed.

MOTION: By Commissioner Mathewson, seconded by Commissioner Peirona to approve Resolution No. 2000-17 approving a modification to the master sign program for the Village Center at 1000 El Camino Real:

AYES: Mathewson, Wiecha, Petersen, Purcell, Peirona, Phillips, Parsons

Chair Parsons announced that the Commission's decision could be appealed to the City Council within ten days.

Commissioner Phillips asked about the Caltrans schedule for completion of retaining walls and the public right-of-way. Chair Parsons stated that it was his understanding that the retaining wall was partially in the public right-of-way and partially on the private property of the owner and that construction was due to start within 30 days. It was hoped that the date would be moved up and, in the meantime, they're planning to open Max's and hoped that the wood fences would help to avoid any accidents.

Principal Planner de Melo stated that staff had also given the go ahead for the applicant to come forward with their landscaping improvements plans. There were some modifications to the landscaping along the El Camino Real side of the Center. Commissioner Phillips asked if the contractor was the same one who was working on the Caltrans final improvement of the station and building of the steps and walkways. Principal Planner de Melo said he would have to look into this.

Public Hearing - 524 Vannier Dr.; To consider a floor area exception and single-family design review to construct a ground-floor addition of approximately 493 sq. ft. to an existing 3,132.5 sq. ft. home. The total proposed floor area would be 3,625 sq. ft. where the maximum permitted is 3,500 sq. ft. Without the Ordinance cap, the permitted floor area would be 5,910 sq. ft. The existing floor area ratio (FAR) is 0.278 and the proposed is 0.322. The addition would also include extending and reconfiguring the garage to an interior dimension of 20.5' x 20.5' (currently the garage usable space is 18 ft. in width with a portion of the garage at 20 ft. in width but only 16 ft. in depth) (Appl. No. 00-1019); APN: 044-193-040; Zoned: R-1A; CEQA Status: Exempt; Sharon Willson (Applicant); Lucy and Greg Ballard (Owners)

Principal Planner de Melo presented the staff report recommending approval.

The applicant declined Chair Parsons' invitation to speak about the project.

Chair Parsons opened the public hearing. No one came forward to speak.

MOTION: By Commissioner Wiecha, seconded by Commissioner Mathewson, to close the public hearing. The motion passed.

Commissioner Peirona stated that the plan was very nice.

Commissioner Purcell did not like the statements on page 3 in the staff report "the purpose of FAR exceptions is to help prevent or lessen inconsistencies in floor area ratio standards among neighboring properties or when no significant increase in building bulk results..." and "the proposed changes to the home would serve to lessen inconsistencies in floor area standards among neighboring properties in that the proposed floor area of .322 would fall between the high FAR of 0.413 and the low of 0.148 in the project area". She felt it was a specious argument since the existing FAR at .277 fell between the

high and low FAR; she would like to see this removed from the staff report and from finding #3 in the resolution. She could not agree with finding #3 and would like all references to that stricken from the findings and preferably from the staff report as well. Chair Parsons stated that the Commission was required to make finding #3. Commissioner Purcell commented on finding #3 that the addition would be compatible with the existing residence and neighboring properties, however, she objected to the part of the sentence that it would lessen inconsistencies.

The Commission briefly discussed the proposed project. Commissioner Mathewson stated that in principle he agreed with Commissioner Purcell about the consistency wording and said that he would like to work with staff to rewrite it. Commissioner Mathewson said that he couldn't make finding #3 the way it was currently written, however, he thought it was a wonderful project.

MOTION: By Commissioner Peirona, seconded by Commissioner Wiecha to approve Resolution No. 2000-18 approving a floor area ratio exception and design review at 524 Vannier Drive:

AYES: Wiecha, Petersen, Peirona, Phillips, Parsons

NOES: Purcell, Mathewson

Principal Planner de Melo stated that staff could work with the Commission to come up with some wording that would be a little more consistent and would fit within the parameters of the FAR findings. He added that staff's intention was to illustrate a condition that actually took into account covered porches and walkways and that the wording referred to other properties where those areas were not being counted. Commissioner Peirona noted that the two Commissioners who voted against the proposal mainly had trouble with the actual wording rather than the concept.

Chair Parsons suggested that it would help if staff could find a way to lessen the inconsistencies and be more neutral on the issue, and it definitely needed to be looked at when the Commission talked about revising the FAR. It was their intent to bring this matter up for discussion shortly.

Chair Parsons announced that the Commission's decision could be appealed to the City Council within 10 days.

Continued Public Hearing - To consider an amendment to Ordinance No. 360, Section 8, the parking ordinance, to require the upgrade of one-car residential garage to two-car garages when one or more bedrooms is being added (Appl. No. 00-1014); CEQA Status: Exempt; City of Belmont (Applicant)

Chair Parsons suggested continuing the public hearing until the joint City Council/Planning Commission meeting.

Chair Parsons opened the public hearing. No one came forward to speak.

MOTION: By Commissioner Phillips, seconded by Commissioner Mathewson to continue the public hearing to April 18, 2000. The motion passed.

Continued Public Hearing - To consider public, Commission, and staff comments on the operation of the Single-Family Design Review Ordinance, and direction for any amendments to be considered at a future public hearing (Appl. No. 00-1015); CEQA Status: Exempt; City of Belmont (Applicant)

Chair Parsons suggested continuing the public hearing until the joint City Council/Planning Commission meeting.

Chair Parsons opened the public hearing. No one came forward to speak.

MOTION: By Commissioner Phillips, seconded by Commissioner Mathewson to continue the public hearing to April 18, 2000. The motion passed.

REPORTS, STUDIES, UPDATES, AND COMMENTS

Chair Parsons suggested that the FAR discussion at the joint Council/Commission meeting should include whether covered porches and decks should be counted as FAR.

Chair Parsons asked staff if the Commission was planning to delay reviewing proposals for the Walgreen's block as a result of vacancies in City government. Principal Planner de Melo stated that the RFP deadline was April 7 and staff expected to receive three to five proposals. Principal Planner de Melo added that there would be a budget presentation on April 6 which would outline the City's budget goals and objectives for the coming fiscal year. Principal Planner de Melo expected that it would be made clear by the Council regarding the RFP during the budget meeting. Commissioner Peirona announced that he had met on-site with Mayor Cook and a developer who wanted to have the potential of building 100 apartments. A discussion followed about the potential for increasing the residential density over that called for in the RFP, noting that several developers had suggested that possibility. Principal Planner de Melo stated that staff was encouraging all developers to submit their proposals.

Commissioner Purcell noted that the Transportation Authority Citizen Advisory Committee was attempting to do more public outreach. She asked the commissioners if they would object to her giving their names and addresses to the Committee so that they could be notified of public hearings in the community. There were no verbal objections.

Chair Parsons noted that the weekly report showed a number of projects and offered his support.

Commissioner Peirona welcomed new Commissioner Madeline Petersen.

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m. to meet for a regular meeting on April 18, 2000.

Carlos de Melo

Acting Planning Commission Secretary

04-04-00